

THE IDLE AMERICAN

Eclipse in our Rearview Mirror....

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Enough already. The eclipse of April 8 has been smothered with coverage by both mass and social media. Americans--some who flail at things that go “bump” in the night--yearned for even more darkness! They carved out time from busy schedules and squeezed funds from their budgets to make their way to a slice of the globe where the solar eclipse darkened the day for some four minutes--give or take a few seconds.

‘Twas sheer folly for most of us, but millions thought otherwise, rushing in to swell populations by three and four-fold in some cities and towns. And folks who had something to sell had field days, dwarfing the much-discussed effects of inflation. A “hang the cost” attitude prevailed.

Motel rooms for April 8 were sold out months ago, and some car rentals cost \$600 a day. Hertz reported a 3,000% increase in advanced bookings. Eclipse-seekers were happy to sign every contract they saw....

Such exorbitance brings to mind a story told by an avid bird hunter, who bragged to his wife that he lowered the family meat budget with his kill.

“Not so fast, Felix,” his wife responded. “As I recall, last year you bought a new shotgun, spent a few hundred dollars on a hunting lease, took off a day from work to drive 150 miles, fire six shots and bag three birds.” The game fell short of providing an entrée. Instead, it was a dainty appetizer that cost about \$50 per ounce.”

“But April 8 was the only chance we had to see a full eclipse,” one guy moaned. “The previous total eclipse was in 1878, and there won’t be another one until 2317.”....

This year, Dallas was the largest city totally darkened when the moon--400 times smaller than the sun--orbited 400 times closer to the earth.

We were warned repeatedly about the danger of staring at the sun, so most of us didn’t.

About 31 million Americans and 12 million Texans were affected by the eclipse....

While on topics astrological, I can’t shake a television interview a couple of decades ago with a 100-year-old woman, long known for her cynicism and negative views on all topics. She

probably called the TV station to make sure the news folks knew about her 100th birthday. Whoever drew the assignment no doubt dreaded the interview with “Negative Nancy.”

She was asked about her memories, which were all negative. “All Thanksgiving Holidays were blighted by too much sage in the dressing and I never got to the stores before they ran out of Cabbage Patch dolls,” she moaned. She also complained about always being the last person chosen at school for playground games. “Don’t you have at least one positive memory?” the interviewer asked.

After much thumb-twiddling and staring round about, she finally answered, “Well, I did see Halley’s Comet back in 1986, but just from a distance.”....

With all the attendant angles about the temporary darkness, it is important to mention darkness in the political world. It never goes away.

My Uncle Mort phoned the other day. He wanted to know if I’d heard about the name of an unlikely presidential candidate. He mentioned that a Texas public school teacher has changed his name to “Literally Anybody Else,” and that it will appear on the ballot.

“Sounds good to me,” Mort snorted. “Now I’ve got someone to root for,” greatly disappointed by most elected officials at both national and state levels.....

Much-maligned AT&T used the eclipse positively, offering a free watch party featuring former NASA astronaut Jose Hernandez. He answered children’s questions about science and technology.

After being turned down 11 times for NASA astronaut training, he worked on various assignments until his 2008 selection as a mission specialist on the STS-128 mission to the International Space Station in August, 2009.

Eclipse glasses were given to the first 4,000 attendees....

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